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Texas Sheriff A. D'Wayne Jernigan

(Washington, D.C.) - The U.S. House is expected to pass today a budget bill that includes \$60,000,000 in emergency grant funding to support Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez' request to expand and improve Operation Stonegarden, a border law enforcement agency grant program that President Bush had zeroed out in his 2008 budget request.

"To achieve strong and smart border control we need a comprehensive strategy that supports our border law enforcement agencies and incorporates the local expertise of our border communities. The \$60,000,000 in emergency funding through Operation Stonegarden is critically needed by our sheriff and police departments who everyday face the growing problems of drug and weapons smuggling, as well as human trafficking," said Congressman Rodriguez, a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. "My position as the only Texas-Mexico border representative on the Appropriations Committee provides me a unique opportunity to advocate for much needed increases in funding for our border communities, and I was proud to advocate for this critical funding on behalf of our border law enforcement agencies."

Texas Sheriff A. D'Wayne Jernigan of Val Verde County stated upon learning of the emergency funding for Operation Stonegarden included in the bill, "Operation Stonegarden has been a critical component of the funding that has allowed border Sheriffs to create an unprecedented reduction in crime in our border jurisdictions. Congressman Rodriguez' commitment to continued Stonegarden funding is essential to our continued success."

Grants awarded under Operation Stonegarden will support coordination between local and federal law enforcement agencies and will be made on a competitive basis to towns, cities, and counties along the land borders of the United States. Among the costs that can be covered by Operation Stonegarden grants will be overtime pay, vehicle maintenance, fuel costs, and equipment replacement.

The legislation is expected to pass the House of Representatives late today before going to the Senate for final consideration.

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